

Chapter 7: THE ATTACK LOOMS

First Arrivals in California



ON JANUARY 15, 2000, NAWAF AL HAZMI AND KHALID AL MIHDHAR, TWO OF THE TERRORISTS ON FLIGHT 77, ARRIVED IN LOS ANGELES AND SPENT TWO WEEKS THERE BEFORE MOVING ON TO SAN DIEGO.

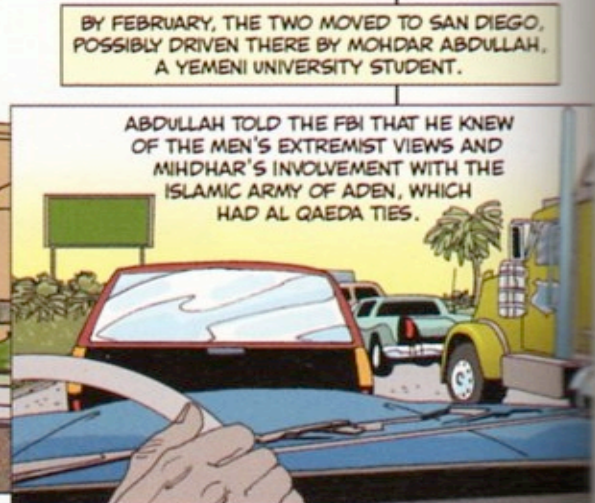


THEY WERE DIRECTED TO ENROLL IN ENGLISH CLASSES SO THEY COULD LEARN THE LANGUAGE AND BEGIN PILOT TRAINING.

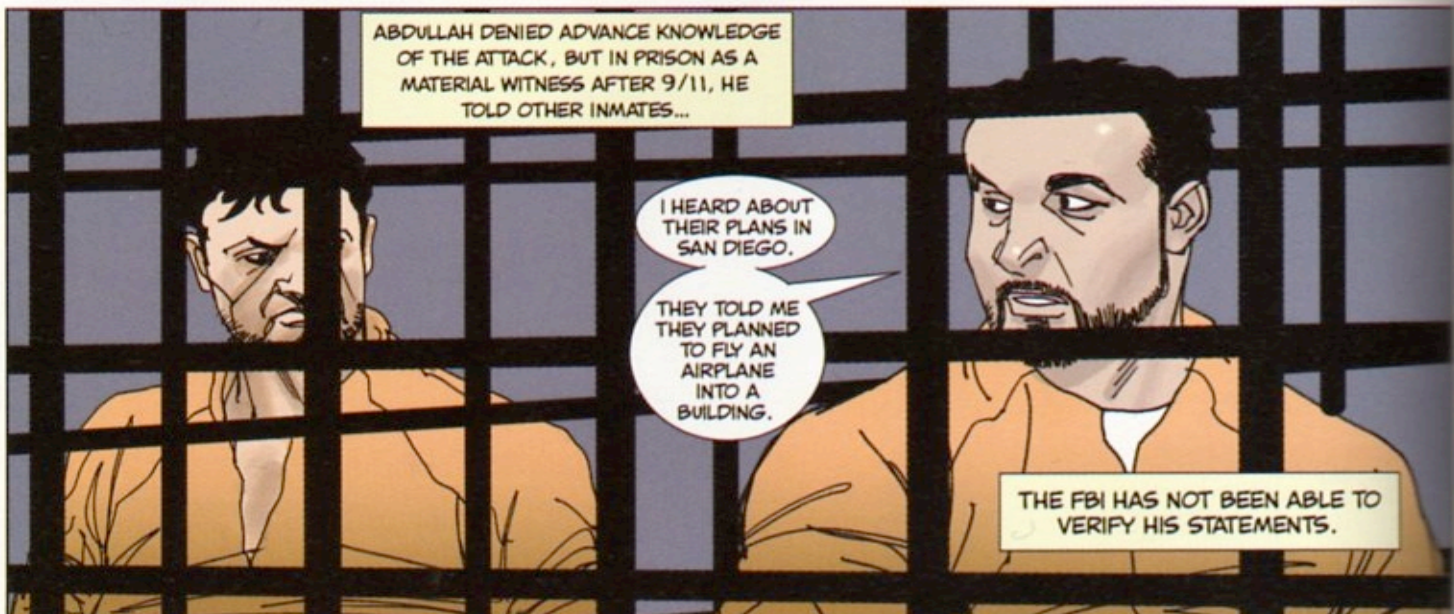
KHALID SHEIKH MOHAMMED, ORGANIZER OF THE PLANES OPERATION, DENIES THERE WERE AL QAEDA AGENTS IN CALIFORNIA. THE COMMISSION DOES NOT CREDIT THIS DENIAL. THEY BELIEVE IT UNLIKELY THAT THE TWO, NEITHER OF WHOM SPOKE ENGLISH, WOULD COME TO THE U.S. WITHOUT ASSISTANCE AWAITING THEM.



THEY APPEARED TO HAVE OBTAINED ASSISTANCE FROM THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY, SPECIFICALLY THE ONE SURROUNDING THE PROMINENT KING FAHD MOSQUE IN CULVER CITY.



ABDULLAH TOLD THE FBI THAT HE KNEW OF THE MEN'S EXTREMIST VIEWS AND MIHDHAR'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ISLAMIC ARMY OF ADEN, WHICH HAD AL QAEDA TIES.



ABDULLAH DENIED ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ATTACK, BUT IN PRISON AS A MATERIAL WITNESS AFTER 9/11, HE TOLD OTHER INMATES...

THE FBI HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO VERIFY HIS STATEMENTS.

IN SAN DIEGO, THE TWO MEN RENTED A ROOM OWNED BY AN INDIVIDUAL THEY MET AT A MOSQUE.

HAZMI AND MIHDHAR MIXED IN WELL WITH THE CITY'S ISLAMIC COMMUNITY. ABDULLAH HELPED THEM GET DRIVER'S LICENSES AND APPLY TO LANGUAGE AND FLIGHT SCHOOLS.

NEW LICENSES

THE COMMISSION'S IMPRESSION IS THAT HAZMI AND MIHDHAR SOUGHT AND FOUND A GROUP OF LIKE-MINDED MUSLIMS WITH ROOTS IN YEMEN AND SAUDI ARABIA ASSOCIATED WITH MOHDAR ABDULLAH AND THE RABAT MOSQUE IN LA MESA.

HAZMI AND MIHDHAR CAME TO THE U.S. TO LEARN ENGLISH, TAKE FLYING LESSONS, AND BECOME PILOTS.

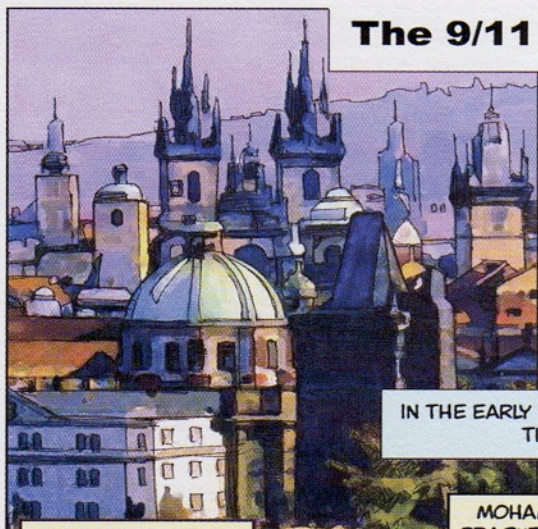
THEY SOON LEARNED THEY WERE CAPABLE OF NEITHER.

STRUGGLING TO ADAPT AND HOMESICK, MIHDHAR MOVED BACK TO YEMEN ON JUNE 10, 2000. HAZMI STAYED ON AND WAS JOINED BY HANI HANJOUR, THE NEWLY ARRIVED HIJACKER PILOT.

HANJOUR HAD ARRIVED IN SAN DIEGO ON DECEMBER 8, AND DAYS LATER HE AND HAZMI DISAPPEARED...

...SUPPOSEDLY TO TAKE FLYING LESSONS IN SAN JOSE.

The 9/11 Pilots in the United States



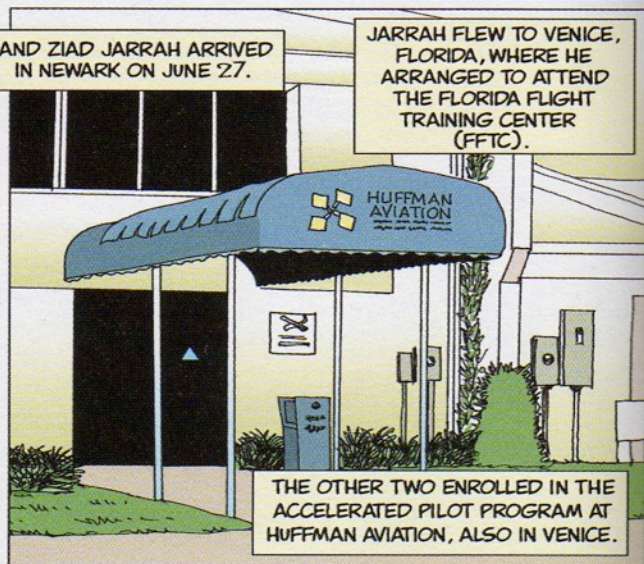
IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 2000, THE HAMBURG GROUP ARRIVED IN THE UNITED STATES TO BEGIN FLIGHT TRAINING. ALL THREE OF THESE MEN WOULD BE PILOTS ON THE 9/11 OPERATION.

MARWAN AL SHEHHI CAME ON MAY 29, ARRIVING IN NEWARK FROM BRUSSELS.

MOHAMED ATTA FLEW FROM PRAGUE TO NEWARK ON JUNE 3.

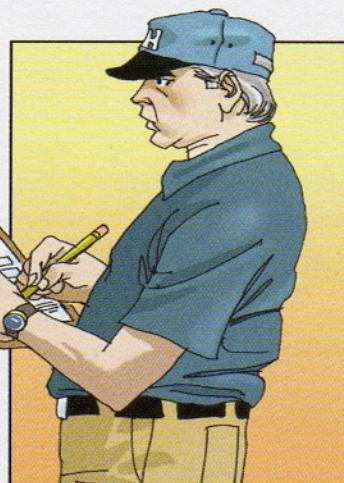
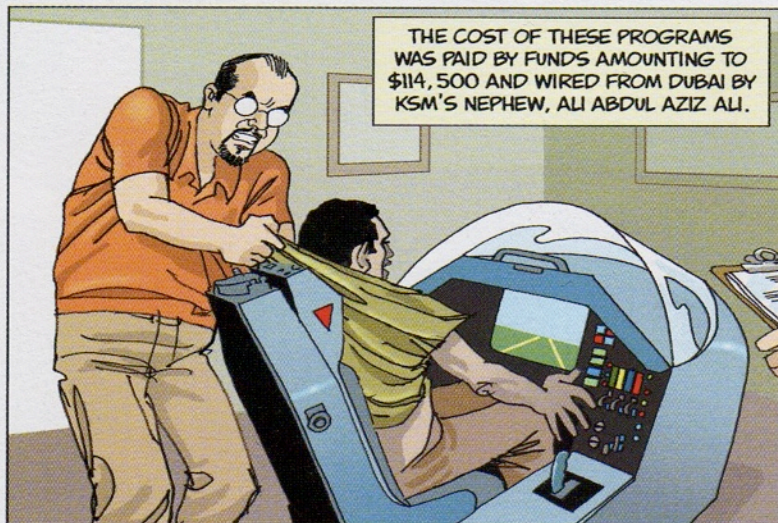
AND ZIAD JARRAH ARRIVED IN NEWARK ON JUNE 27.

JARRAH FLEW TO VENICE, FLORIDA, WHERE HE ARRANGED TO ATTEND THE FLORIDA FLIGHT TRAINING CENTER (FFTC).



THE OTHER TWO ENROLLED IN THE ACCELERATED PILOT PROGRAM AT HUFFMAN AVIATION, ALSO IN VENICE.

THE COST OF THESE PROGRAMS WAS PAID BY FUNDS AMOUNTING TO \$114,500 AND WIRED FROM DUBAI BY KSM'S NEPHEW, ALI ABDUL AZIZ ALI.

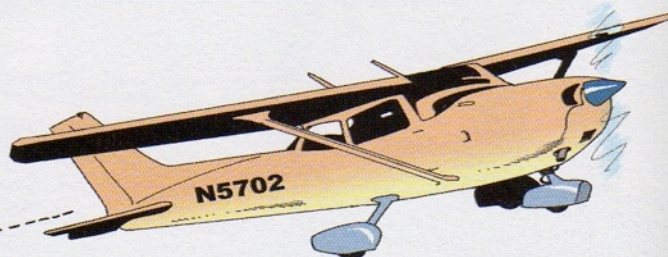


IN LATE SEPTEMBER, ATTA AND SHEHHI ENROLLED AT JONES AVIATION IN SARASOTA, 20 MILES NORTH OF VENICE.

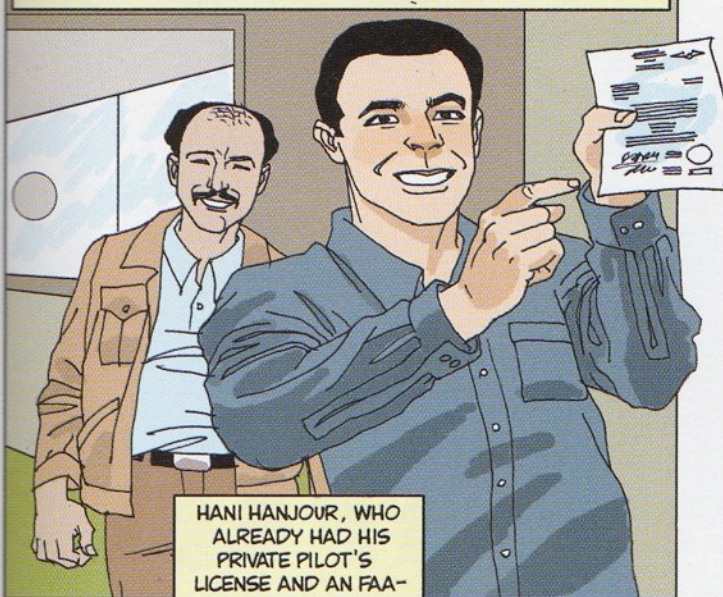
INSTRUCTORS THERE DESCRIBED THE TWO AS AGGRESSIVE AND RUDE, AND SOMETIMES...

...THEY EVEN FOUGHT TO TAKE OVER THE CONTROLS DURING TRAINING FLIGHTS.

THEY RECEIVED FAILING GRADES AND RETURNED TO HUFFMAN.

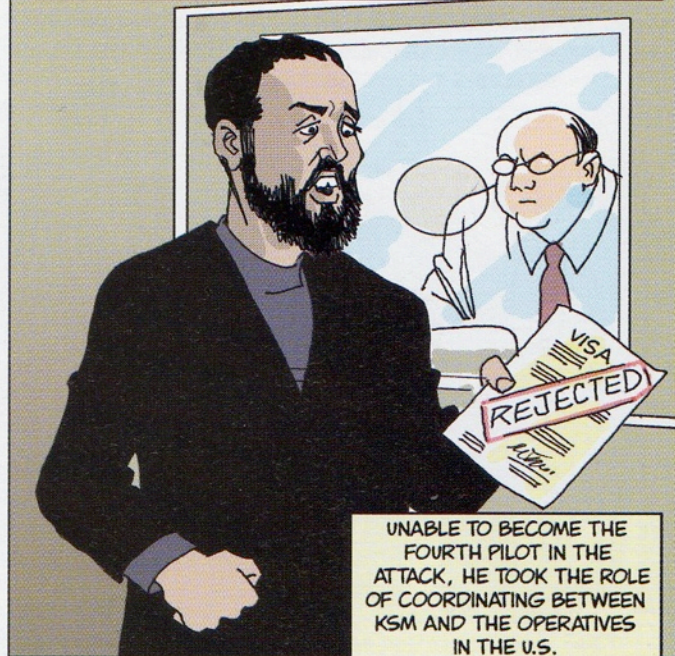


IN EARLY AUGUST, JARRAH OBTAINED A SINGLE-ENGINE PRIVATE PILOT CERTIFICATE. HE PROMPTLY FLEW TO GERMANY TO SPEND TIME WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND, AYSEL SENGUEN, THE FIRST OF FIVE FOREIGN TRIPS HE TOOK DURING THIS PERIOD.

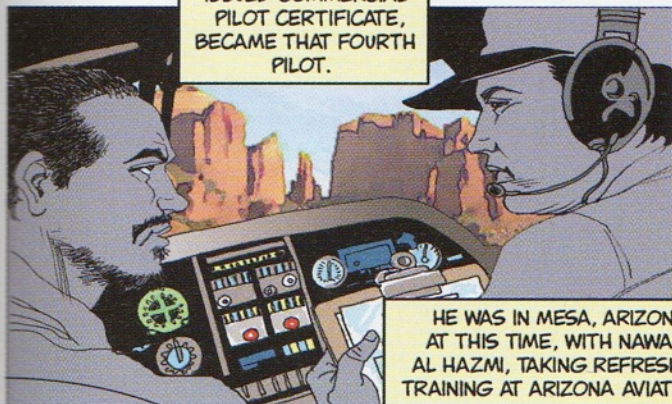


HANI HANJOUR, WHO ALREADY HAD HIS PRIVATE PILOT'S LICENSE AND AN FAA-ISSUED COMMERCIAL PILOT CERTIFICATE, BECAME THAT FOURTH PILOT.

RAMZI BINALSHIBH, WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AT FFTC WITH JARRAH, FAILED TO OBTAIN A U.S. VISA IN FOUR ATTEMPTS.



UNABLE TO BECOME THE FOURTH PILOT IN THE ATTACK, HE TOOK THE ROLE OF COORDINATING BETWEEN KSM AND THE OPERATIVES IN THE U.S.



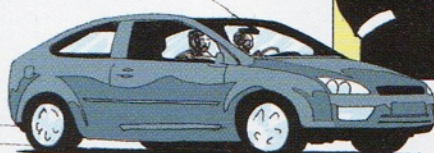
HE WAS IN MESA, ARIZONA, AT THIS TIME, WITH NAWAF AL HAZMI, TAKING REFRESHER TRAINING AT ARIZONA AVIATION.

HANJOUR HAD SPENT MUCH TIME IN ARIZONA PREVIOUSLY. HE HAD ASSOCIATED WITH SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS HOLDING EXTREMIST BELIEFS WHO HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF COUNTERTERRORISM INVESTIGATIONS.



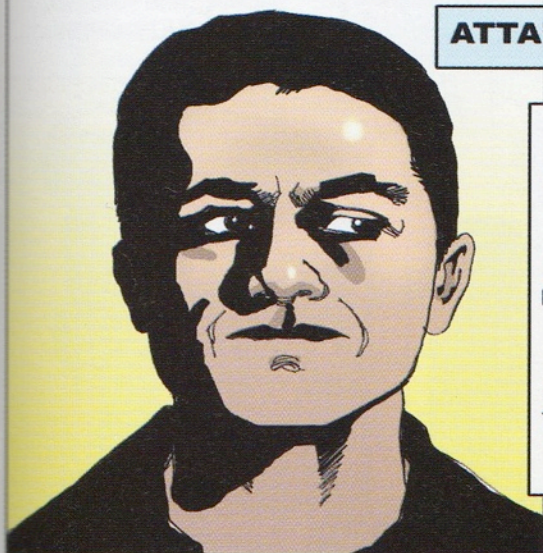
FBI INVESTIGATORS HAVE SPECULATED THAT AL QAEDA MAY HAVE DIRECTED OTHER EXTREMISTS IN THE PHOENIX AREA TO ENROLL IN AVIATION TRAINING.

BY THE END OF MARCH 2001, HANJOUR HAD COMPLETED HIS TRAINING AND DROVE EAST WITH HAZMI TO AWAIT THE ARRIVAL OF THE "MUSCLE HIJACKERS"—THOSE WHO WOULD STORM THE COCKPITS AND CONTROL THE PASSENGERS.



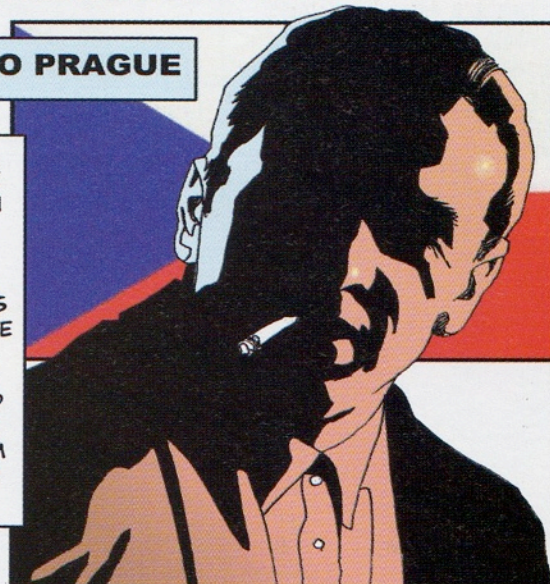
THE THREE PILOTS IN FLORIDA WERE BY THIS TIME SIMULATING FLIGHTS ON LARGE JETS.

ATTA'S ALLEGED TRIP TO PRAGUE



MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN OF ATTA'S ALLEGED TRIP TO PRAGUE AND OF A SUPPOSED MEETING ON APRIL 9, 2001, WITH AN IRAQI INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, AHMAD KHALIL IBRAHIM SAMIR AL ANI. THE COMMISSION BELIEVES IT IS **NOT** SUPPORTED BY AVAILABLE EVIDENCE.

THERE ARE PHOTOS THAT SHOW ATTA IN THE U.S. AT THE TIME, AND HIS CELL PHONE WAS BEING USED. THE ACCUSATION ORIGINATES FROM A SINGLE SOURCE OF THE CZECH INTELLIGENCE SERVICE.



Assembling the Teams

DURING THE SUMMER AND EARLY AUTUMN OF 2000, BIN LADIN AND SENIOR AL QAEDA LEADERS IN AFGHANISTAN STARTED SELECTING THE MUSCLE HIJACKERS.

THESE MEN, DESPITE WHAT THEY WERE CALLED, WERE NOT PHYSICALLY IMPOSING. MOST OF THEM WERE BETWEEN 5' 5" AND 5' 7" IN HEIGHT.



THEY CAME FROM A VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIETAL BACKGROUNDS. ALL WERE BETWEEN 20 AND 28, MOST WERE UNEMPLOYED, HAD NO MORE THAN A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION, AND WERE UNMARRIED. TWELVE OF THE THIRTEEN HIJACKERS WERE FROM SAUDI ARABIA. ONLY FAYEZ BANIHAMMAD CAME FROM THE UAE.

FIVE CAME FROM THE POOR ASIR PROVINCE THAT BORDERS YEMEN. THIS IS A WEAKLY POLICED AREA SOMETIMES CALLED "THE WILD FRONTIER."



FOUR CAME FROM A CLUSTER OF THREE TOWNS IN THE UNDERDEVELOPED AL-BAHAH REGION AND SHARED A TRIBAL AFFILIATION.

OF THESE FOUR, WALEED AND WAIL AL SHEHRI WERE BROTHERS. ABDUL AZIZ AL OMARI HAD A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, WAS MARRIED, AND HAD A DAUGHTER.



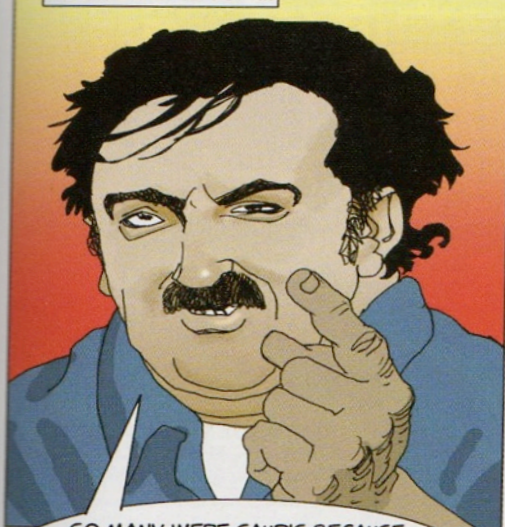
WALEED AND WAIL AL SHEHRI



OMARI



ACCORDING TO KSM...



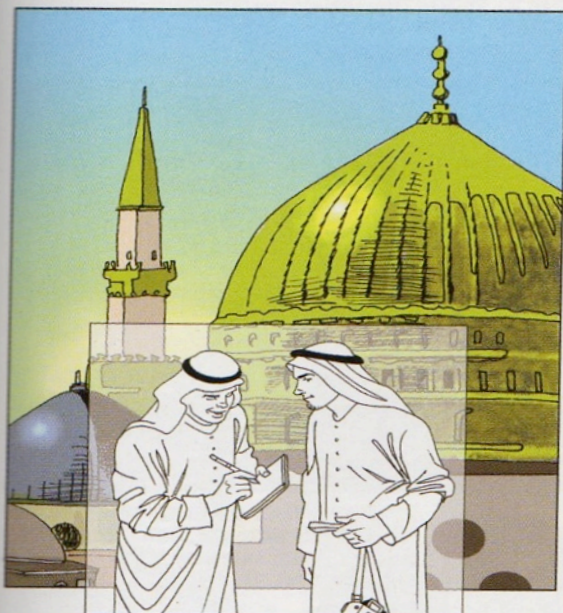
SO MANY WERE SAUDIS BECAUSE SAUDIS COMPRISED THE LARGEST PORTION OF THE POOL OF RECRUITS.

BINALSHIBH, HOWEVER, ARGUED THAT SO MANY WERE SAUDIS BECAUSE AL QAEDA WANTED TO SEND A MESSAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SAUDI ARABIA ABOUT ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNITED STATES.

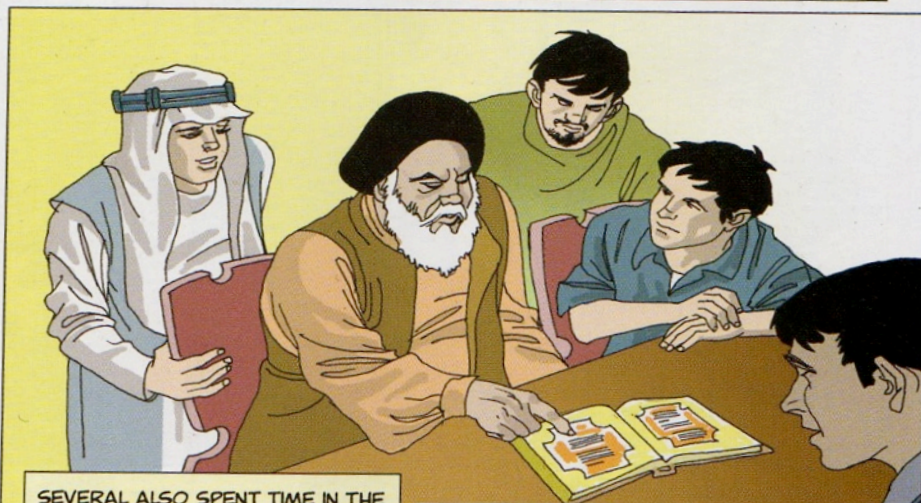


KSM ESTIMATES THAT IN ANY GIVEN CAMP, 70% OF THE MUJAHIDEEN ARE SAUDIS, 20% ARE YEMENI, AND ONLY 10% COME FROM ELSEWHERE.

MOST SAUDI MUSCLE HIJACKERS DEVELOPED EXTREMIST TIES TWO TO THREE YEARS BEFORE THE ATTACK. THEY WERE TARGETED FOR RECRUITMENT OUTSIDE OF AFGHANISTAN AND PROBABLY IN SAUDI ARABIA ITSELF.



RECRUITS CAME THROUGH CONTACTS AT UNIVERSITIES, AT MOSQUES AND, IN A FEW CASES, WITH FAMILY MEMBERS...

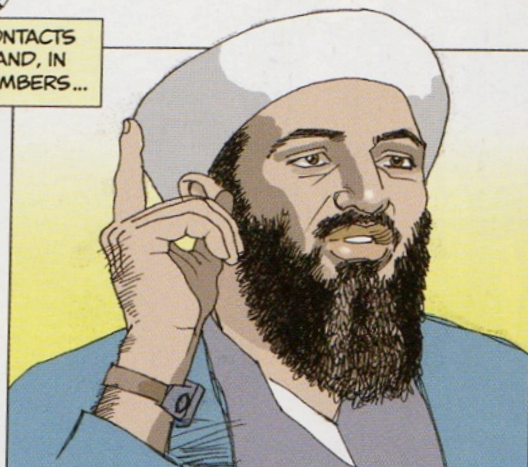


SEVERAL ALSO SPENT TIME IN THE AL QASSIM PROVINCE, THE VERY HEART OF THE STRICT WAHHABI MOVEMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA.

al Qassim Province



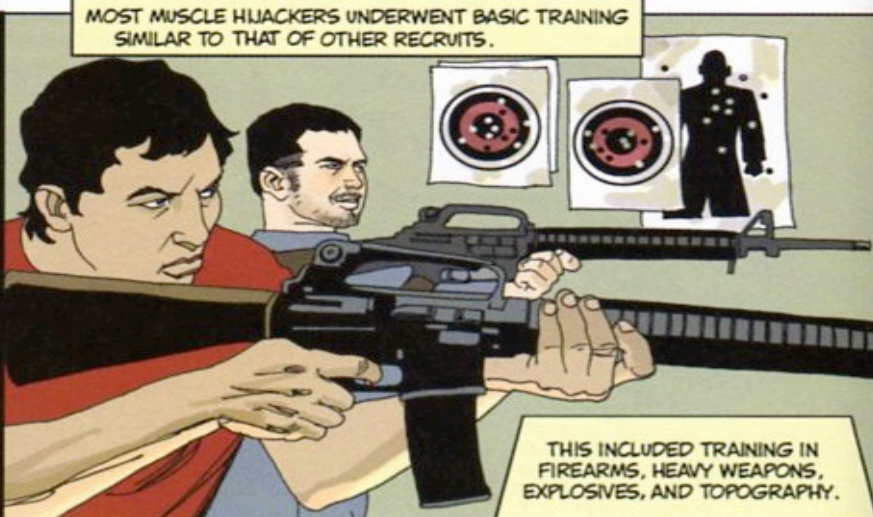
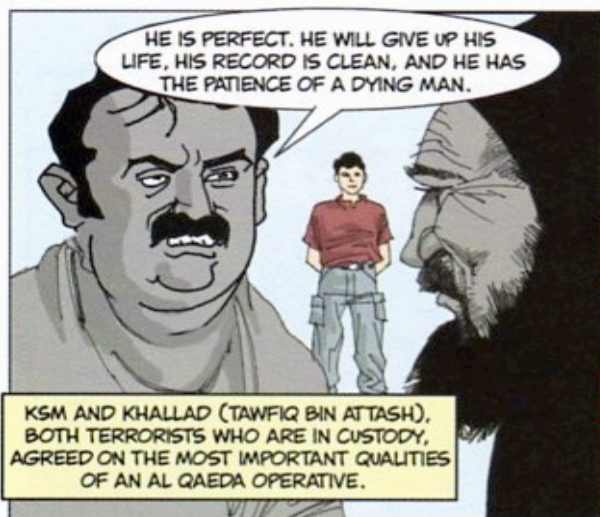
...AND A MOSQUE KNOWN BY MODERATE CLERICS AS A "TERRORIST FACTORY."



WHILE TRAINING AT AL QAEDA CAMPS, A DOZEN OF THEM WHO HEARD BIN LADIN'S SPEECHES...



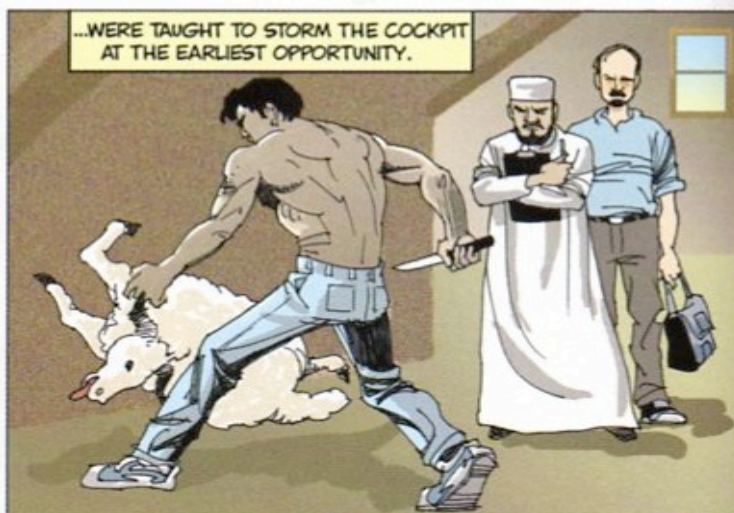
...VOLUNTEERED TO BECOME SUICIDE OPERATIVES AND ENDED UP AS MUSCLE HIJACKERS FOR THE 9/11 OPERATION.



THEY ALSO LEARNED DISCIPLINE AND MILITARY LIFE AND WERE SUBJECTED TO ARTIFICIAL STRESSES TO MEASURE THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL FITNESS AND COMMITMENT TO JIHAD.



THE TRAINEES ALSO BUTCHERED A SHEEP AND A CAMEL TO PREPARE THEM TO USE KNIVES IN THE OPERATION AND...



MUSCLE HIJACKERS BEGAN ARRIVING IN THE U.S. IN LATE APRIL 2001.



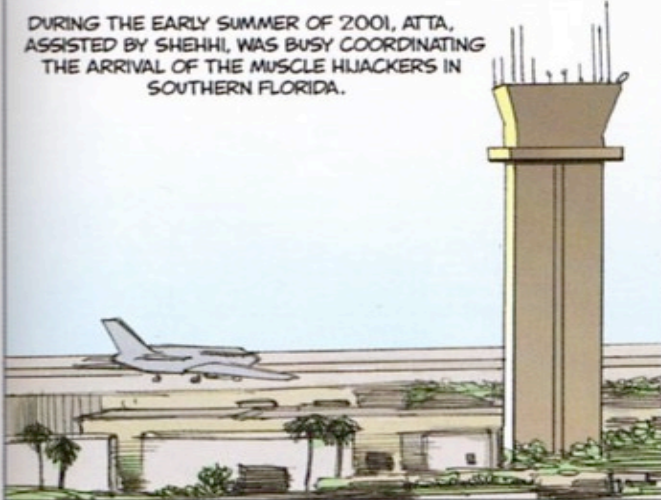
THEY ENTERED IN FOUR CITIES (MIAMI, ORLANDO, WASHINGTON, DC, AND NEW YORK). BY JULY 4, ALL 19 HIJACKERS WERE IN THE UNITED STATES.

WHILE IN SUDAN, SENIOR MEMBERS OF AL QAEDA MAINTAINED CONTACTS WITH IRAN AND THE IRANIAN-SUPPORTED TERRORIST ORGANIZATION HEZBOLLAH. EVIDENCE WAS FOUND THAT 8 TO 10 SAUDI MUSCLE OPERATIVES TRAVELED IN OR OUT OF IRAN BETWEEN OCTOBER 2000 AND FEBRUARY 2001.

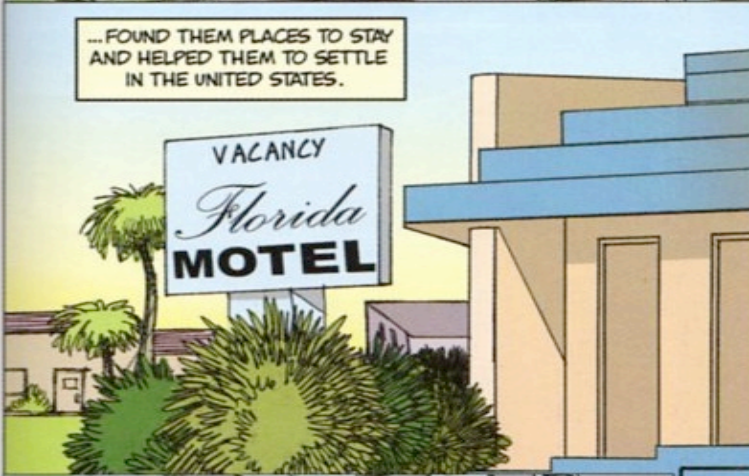
HOWEVER, NO EVIDENCE WAS FOUND THAT IRAN OR HEZBOLLAH WAS AWARE OF THE PLANNING OF THE 9/11 ATTACK.

Final Strategies and Tactics

DURING THE EARLY SUMMER OF 2001, ATTA, ASSISTED BY SHEHHI, WAS BUSY COORDINATING THE ARRIVAL OF THE MUSCLE HIJACKERS IN SOUTHERN FLORIDA.



...FOUND THEM PLACES TO STAY AND HELPED THEM TO SETTLE IN THE UNITED STATES.



THE THREE HAMBURG PILOTS, ATTA, SHEHHI, AND JARRAH, TOOK THE FIRST OF THEIR CROSS-COUNTRY SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS EARLY IN THE SUMMER. EACH TRAVELED FIRST CLASS, ON UNITED AIRLINES, AND ON THE TYPE OF PLANE THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY PILOT.

THEY PICKED THEM UP AT THE AIRPORTS...

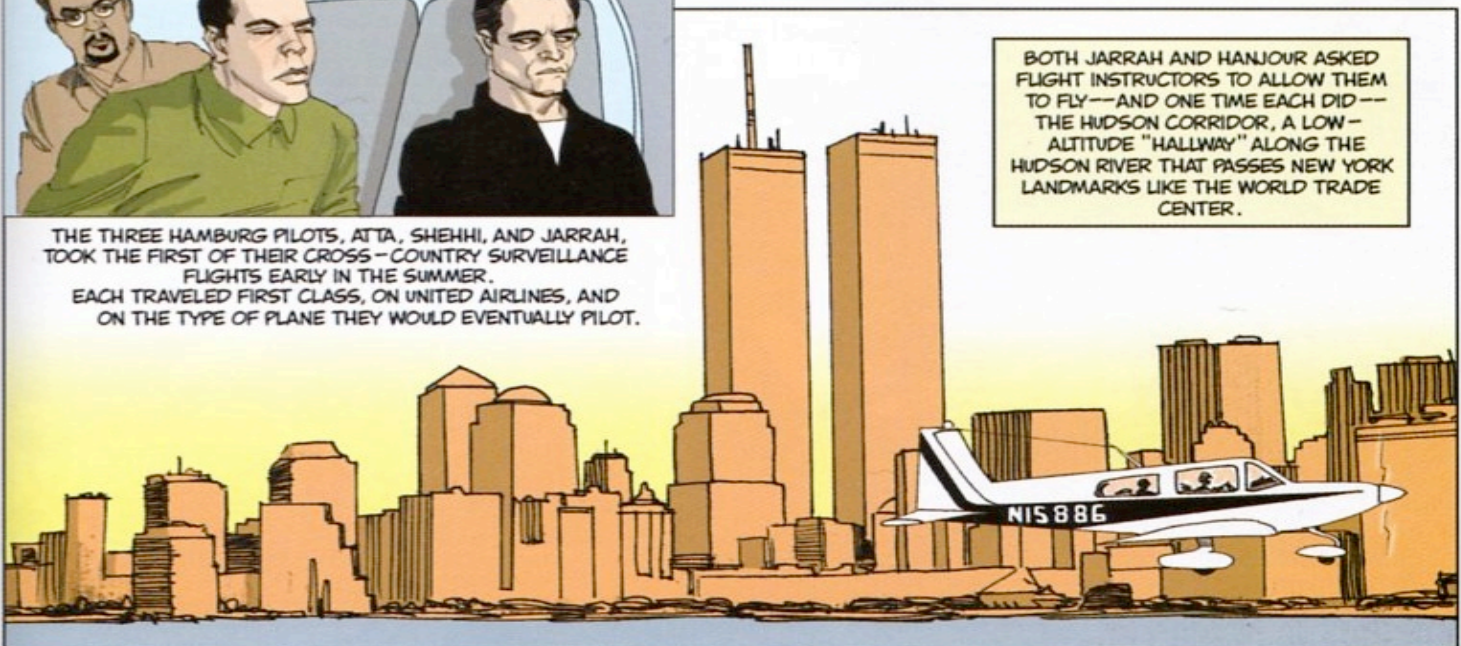


THE NEWCOMERS OPENED BANK ACCOUNTS, ACQUIRED MAILBOXES, RENTED CARS.



SOME EVEN JOINED GYMS, PRESUMABLY TO STAY FIT FOR THE OPERATION.

BOTH JARRAH AND HANJOOR ASKED FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS TO ALLOW THEM TO FLY—AND ONE TIME EACH DID—THE HUDSON CORRIDOR, A LOW-ALTITUDE "HALLWAY" ALONG THE HUDSON RIVER THAT PASSES NEW YORK LANDMARKS LIKE THE WORLD TRADE CENTER.



IN LATE MAY 2001, BINALSHIBH MET WITH BIN LADIN AT AN AL QAEDA FACILITY KNOWN AS "COMPOUND SIX" NEAR KANDAHAR. BIN LADIN TOLD HIM TO ADVISE ATTA TO PROCEED AS PLANNED ON THE FOUR DISCUSSED TARGETS...

...THE WORLD TRADE CENTER... THE PENTAGON... THE WHITE HOUSE... AND THE CAPITOL.



ACCORDING TO BINALSHIBH, BIN LADIN SAID HE PREFERRED THE WHITE HOUSE TO THE CAPITOL.

IN JUNE 2001, BINALSHIBH MET KSM IN PAKISTAN, WHERE KSM TOLD HIM TO ASK ATTA TO SELECT A DATE FOR THE ATTACKS.

FINALLY, ON JULY 8, ATTA ARRIVED IN MADRID AND MET BINALSHIBH THE NEXT DAY.

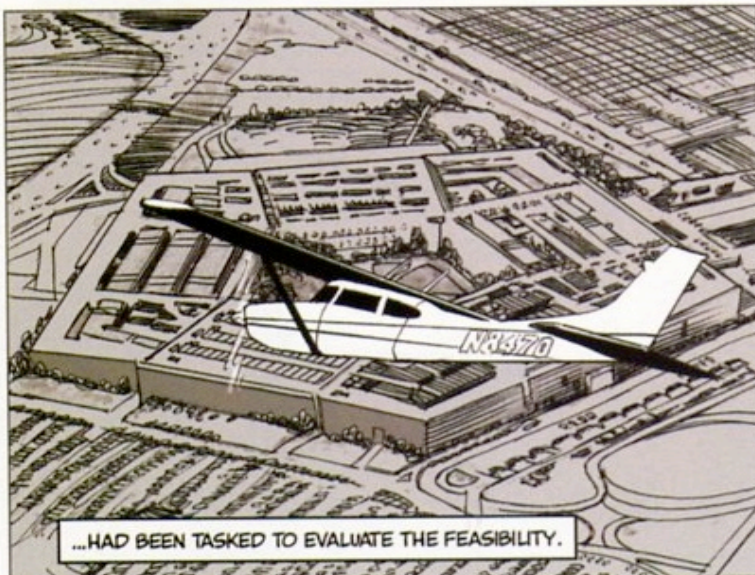
BUSY ORGANIZING THE HIJACKERS, ATTA SAID HE NEEDED FIVE OR SIX WEEKS MORE TO SELECT A DATE FOR THE OPERATION.



ATTA UNDERSTOOD BIN LADIN'S INTEREST IN STRIKING THE WHITE HOUSE, BUT HE BELIEVED THIS TARGET WAS TOO DIFFICULT. HAZMI AND HANJOUR, HOWEVER, WHO HAD FLOWN RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS NEAR THE PENTAGON...

BOTH ATTA AND SHEHHI WOULD HIT THE TRADE CENTER, HANJOUR THE PENTAGON, AND JARRAH THE CAPITOL.

IF ANY PILOT COULD NOT REACH HIS TARGET, HE WAS TO CRASH HIS PLANE.

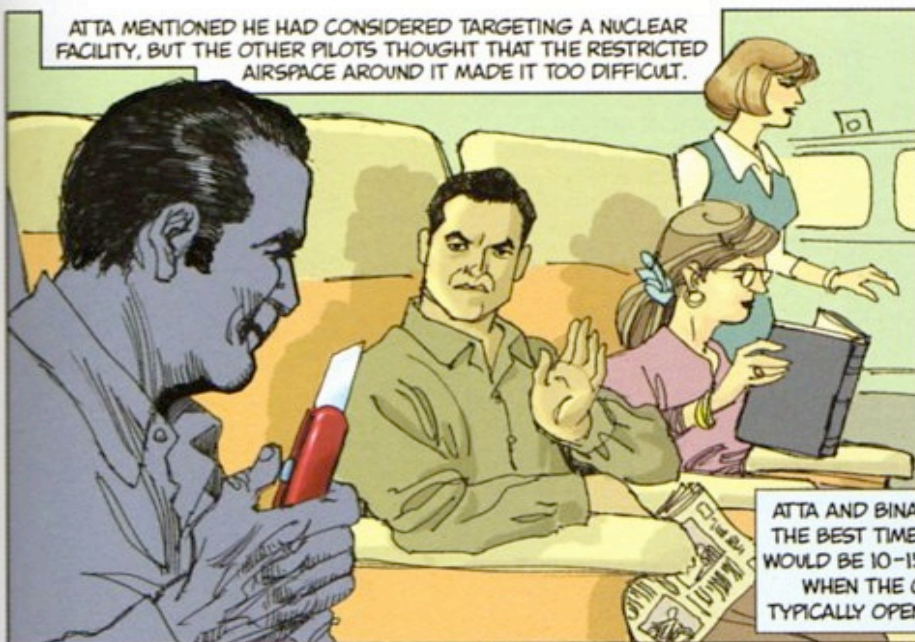


...HAD BEEN TASKED TO EVALUATE THE FEASIBILITY.



ATTA PLANNED TO CRASH HIS ON THE STREETS OF NEW YORK.

ATTA MENTIONED HE HAD CONSIDERED TARGETING A NUCLEAR FACILITY, BUT THE OTHER PILOTS THOUGHT THAT THE RESTRICTED AIRSPACE AROUND IT MADE IT TOO DIFFICULT.



ATTA AND BINALSHIBH DISCUSSED HOW THE BEST TIME TO STORM THE COCKPIT WOULD BE 10-15 MINUTES AFTER TAKEOFF WHEN THE COCKPIT DOORS WERE TYPICALLY OPENED FOR THE FIRST TIME.

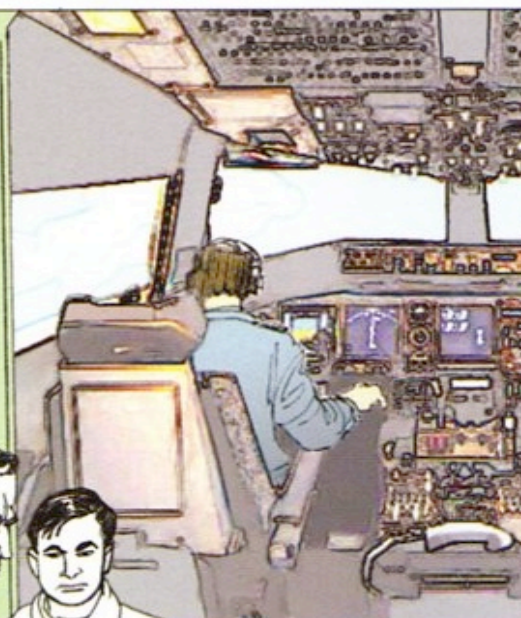


ATTA DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD NEED WEAPONS OTHER THAN BOX CUTTERS.

HE TOLD BINALSHIBH HE WANTED TO SELECT PLANES DEPARTING ON LONG FLIGHTS BECAUSE THEY WOULD BE FULL OF FUEL AND TO HIJACK BOEING AIRCRAFT BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THEM EASIER TO FLY THAN AIRBUSES, WHICH, HE THOUGHT, HAD AN AUTOPILOT THAT DID NOT ALLOW THEM TO BE CRASHED INTO THE GROUND.

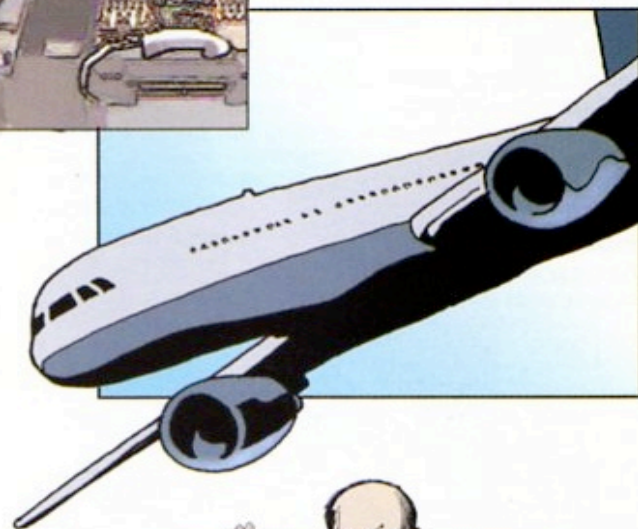


ATTA SAID THE HIJACKERS WOULD BE DIVIDED INTO TEAMS ACCORDING TO THEIR ENGLISH-SPEAKING ABILITY. THIS WAY THEY COULD ASSIST EACH OTHER AND BE ABLE TO COMMAND THE PASSENGERS IN ENGLISH.

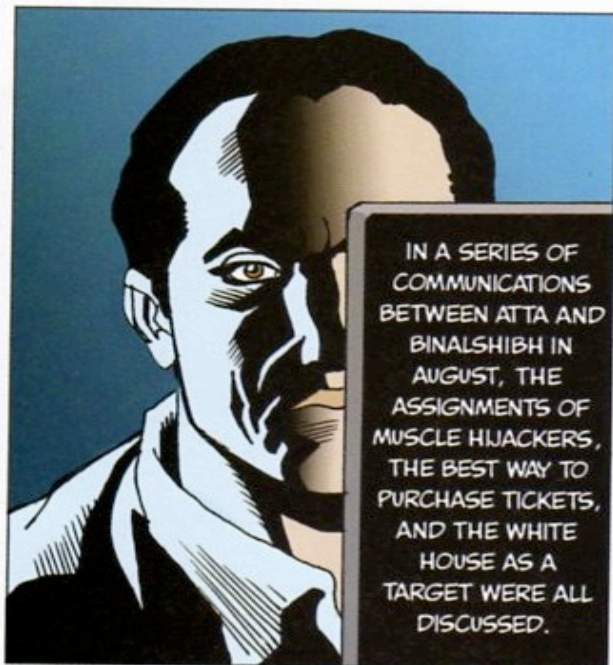


AT ATTA'S REQUEST, BINALSHIBH GAVE HIM EIGHT NECKLACES AND EIGHT BRACELETS FOR THE MEN. THESE WOULD REINFORCE ATTA'S BELIEF THAT IF THE HIJACKERS WERE CLEAN SHAVEN AND WELL DRESSED, THEY WOULD BE TAKEN FOR WEALTHY SAUDIS AND GIVEN LESS NOTICE.

IN AUGUST, MONEY WAS SENT TO ZACARIAS MOUSSAOUI TO HELP HIM PREPARE AS A POTENTIAL PILOT SUBSTITUTE.

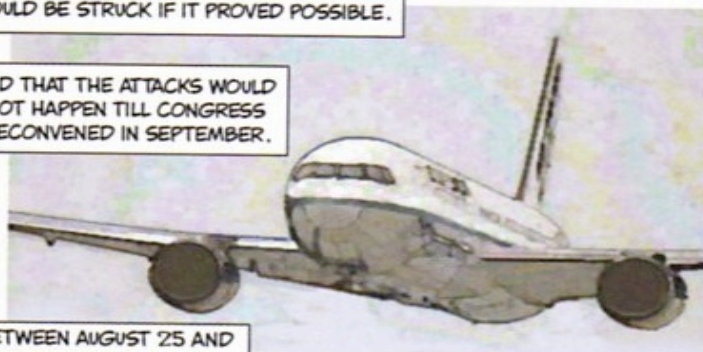


BUT THANKS TO THE SUSPICIONS OF A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR, MOUSSAOUI WAS ARRESTED BY THE INS ON IMMIGRATION CHARGES ON AUGUST 16.



ATTA RESPONDED THAT THE WHITE HOUSE WOULD BE STRUCK IF IT PROVED POSSIBLE.

AND THAT THE ATTACKS WOULD NOT HAPPEN TILL CONGRESS RECONVENED IN SEPTEMBER.



BETWEEN AUGUST 25 AND SEPTEMBER 5, ALL 19 TICKETS WERE PURCHASED...

...FOR SEPTEMBER 11!

IT THEREFORE APPEARS THAT THE ATTACK DATE WAS SELECTED BY THE THIRD WEEK OF AUGUST. AND THE MESSAGE, IN CODE, SENT OUT WAS...



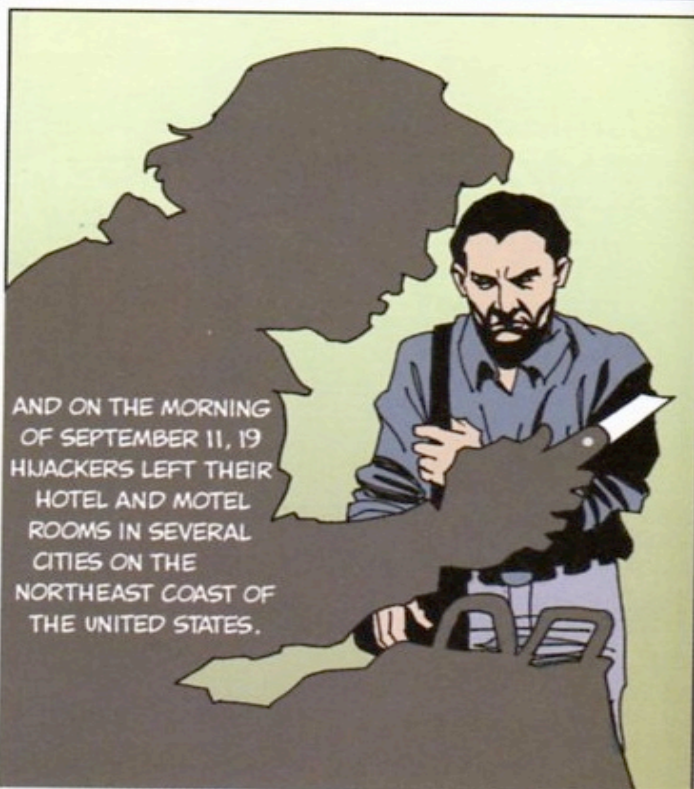
...THE 11TH OF SEPTEMBER.
(11/9)



AL QAEDA'S LONG-PLANNED ASSASSINATION OF THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE LEADER, AHMED SHAH MASSOUD, TOOK PLACE ON SEPTEMBER 9.



THE TALIBAN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE GOT UNDER WAY ON SEPTEMBER 10.



AND ON THE MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 11, 19 HIJACKERS LEFT THEIR HOTEL AND MOTEL ROOMS IN SEVERAL CITIES ON THE NORTHEAST COAST OF THE UNITED STATES.

Name: _____
Date: _____

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1. What were terrorists directed to do when they arrived in California?
2. Who organized the operation of the planes?
3. Who helped the men when they entered the country?
4. Why did Hazmi and Mihdar come to the US?
5. Why did Midhar move back to Yemen?
6. Who paid for the flight school? How much did it cost?
7. How did the flight instructor describe the students?
8. What were “Muscle Hijackers”?
9. Does the evidence support allegation that Atta met with Iraqi Intel?
10. What were the Muscle Hijackers like (age, education, etc)?
11. How was Omari different from the other Hijackers?
12. Why were so many of the Hijackers from Saudi Arabia?
13. What were the important qualities in of an Al Qaeda Operative?
14. How did the hijackers train?
15. What link did Iran have with the 9/11 hijackers?
16. What did the muscle hijackers do when they came to the US?

17. What were the four targets?
18. Why did they decide against targeting the White House?
19. Why didn't they target a nuclear power plant?
20. What weapons did the hijackers use?
21. Why were the men given necklaces and bracelets?
22. What happened to Zacarias Moussaoui?
23. Why did they wait until September for the attacks?
24. What day were the attacks planned for?